

1-5 FA in OIF II

Maintaining FA Competencies While Deployed

ately, much has been written in professional military magazines about the exploits of units in Operations Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Enduring Freedom (OEF). As is the case for direct support (DS) FA battalions supporting the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT), now called the War on Terrorism (WOT), the 1st Battalion, 5th Field Artillery (1-5 FA), 1st Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, proved its versatility while executing a maneuver and fires mission in OIF.

This article not only discusses 1-5 FA's three-part mission in OIF, but also the battery rotation cycle and the live-fire training range the battalion instituted in theater to maintain the Soldiers' FA core competencies while deployed.

1-5 FA had fewer than six weeks' notice for deployment in support of OIF II. Exceptional staff work, flexible junior leaders and disciplined Soldiers ensured the battalion deployed, executed full-spectrum operations and redeployed, proving to be a combat multiplier for

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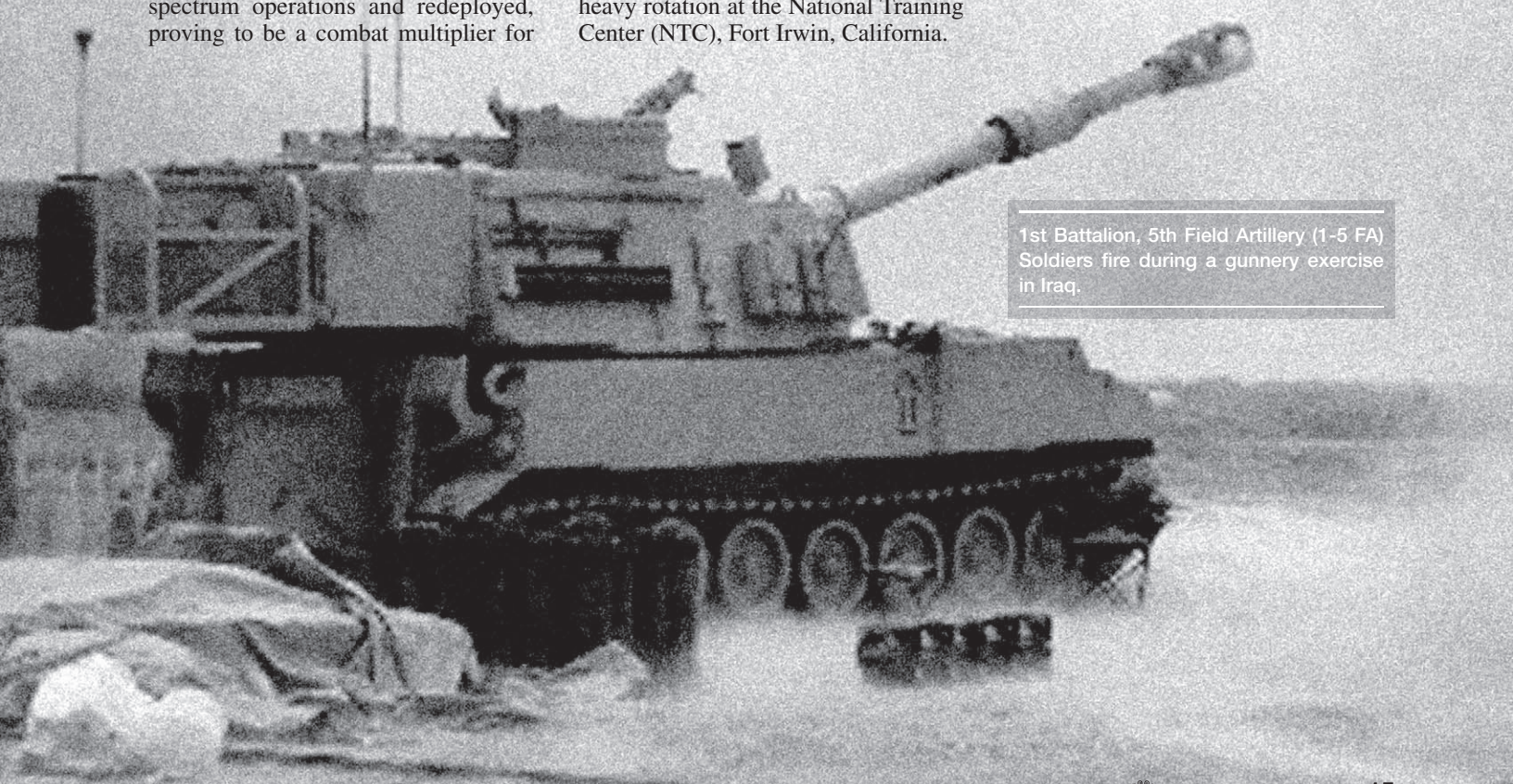
the brigade.

The 1st Brigade from Fort Riley, Kansas, was notified of its impending deployment in support of OIF in August 2003. Because the ground war was complete, the brigade's mission was to support post-hostilities operations. These operations had not been performed on such a large scale since World War II, and reports coming from units in theater indicated that the tasks would be similar to those of the Kosovo Force (KFOR) and Stabilization Force (SFOR) (Bosnia) missions with some additional warfighting tasks.

In addition, the brigade was in the process of becoming an integrated light and heavy brigade. It was headed for a light-heavy rotation at the National Training Center (NTC), Fort Irwin, California.

1-5 FA's Mission. When looking ahead to his mission in Iraq, the brigade commander realized his area of operations (AO) would require more maneuver elements than he had available. Therefore, he assigned 1-5 FA its own AO. 1-5 FA's task organization for OIF II is shown in Figure 1 on Page 16.

The battalion conducted a mission analysis using the military decision-making process (MDMP) outlined in *FM 101-5 Staff Organization and Operations* and redefined its task and purpose to support the brigade. The battalion mission became "1-5 FA attacks to defeat anti-Iraqi forces, conducts base defense and secures Camp Junction City in Ramadi while conducting CMO [civil-military operations] to establish a safe and secure environment throughout the brigade's AO to facilitate Iraq's transition to a self-governing democratic state." Although long, this mission statement



1st Battalion, 5th Field Artillery (1-5 FA)
Soldiers fire during a gunnery exercise
in Iraq.

was necessary to describe the multitude of key tasks assigned.

One of the things we learned in pre-deployment and while in Iraq is that the MDMP works; it facilitates the planning process when followed and is a common reference for problem solving, regardless of the mission.

Based on the mission statement, 1-5 FA defined new tasks to train before deploying and tasks to train once it arrived in theater. The FA battalion had to perform many unconventional tasks, such as conduct base defense and offensive infantry operations to kill or capture anti-Iraqi forces.

Before deploying from Fort Riley, all three firing batteries conducted a Table VII Light Cavalry Gunnery under the coaching of the brigade reconnaissance troop. This provided each gun chief the opportunity to have his crew perform the anticipated firing expected in theater.

In addition to training on core branch skills, all Artillerymen in the battalion completed a theater-specific lane training program at Fort Riley. It included conducting cordons and searches, route reconnaissance, mounted and dismounted patrolling, and military police tasks, such as establishing traffic control points (TCPs). Clearance of buildings was trained in theater. In effect, every Soldier in the battalion was a rifleman but had the intent of winning the hearts and minds of the Iraqi people.

The Deployment. 1-5 FA deployed one six-gun battery to conduct conventional FA missions. In Iraq, one battery was the FA delivery battery, one a motorized infantry battery and one the base defense battery. During the deployment, the batteries rotated through these mission tasks. See Figure 2.

During 1-5 FA's OIF II tour, a typical daily situation report (SITREP) to the brigade may include the following: "First Platoon, Alpha Battery, fired one counterfire mission with eight rounds HE/VT [high-explosive/variable-time fuze] and 22 rounds of illumination in support of TFs [Task Forces] 1-16 and 1-124 Infantry. Second Platoon, Alpha Battery, fired 18 rounds of illumination in support of the brigade reconnaissance troop and one counterfire mission in support of TF 1-34 Armor.

"Delta Battery had no significant enemy activity with one local national bringing two 82-mm [mortar] rounds to the gate to be dropped off in the UXO [unexploded ordinance] pit.

"B Battery conducted one mounted route reconnaissance in support of CIED [counter-improvised-explosive device] operations, one dismounted area reconnaissance in the local village in support of weapons black market operations, one dismounted OP [observation post] and one cordon and search to capture and detain a suspected IED maker."

Nothing in the SITREP for B Battery

sounds like a standard report for a 155-mm battery in a DS battalion.

Base Camp Defense. This part of 1-5 FA's mission is not too different from securing a battery perimeter. This was a fairly standard task right out of the mission training plan (MTP). The brigade's battlespace was large enough to have three geographically separated base camps. One of 1-5 FA's battery was responsible for the defense of one of the base camps—Camp Junction City.

The number of operations, entry control points (ECPs) and reaction forces varied with the size of the camp and expected threat. Because of the other tasks in the battalion's assigned mission and the role of a DS FA battalion in a brigade, base defense required its own command and control element to ensure synchronized efforts within the brigade and with other base tenant units.

Knowing that 1-5 FA would not be massing battalion fires, the battalion fire direction center (FDC) became the base defense command post. This section already was an integrated part of the battalion tactical operations command (TOC) with an officer, senior NCO and several radio-telephone operators (RTOs) to receive reports from the ECPs and the OPs. This cell in the TOC was responsible for base camp defense and the safety of a force of almost 2,000 Soldiers on Camp Junction City.

The cell worked well for the battalion

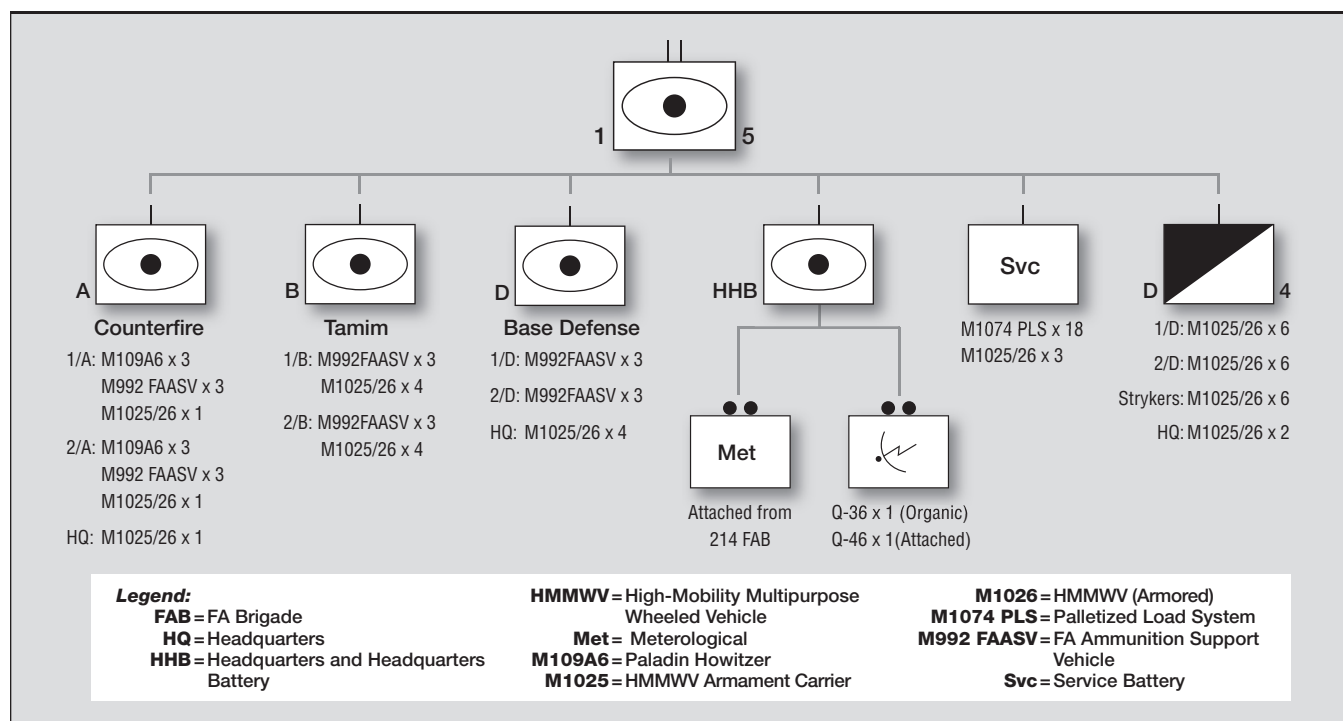


Figure 1: 1st Battalion, 5th Field Artillery (1-5 FA) Task Organization for Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) II

	31 Oct	30 Nov	31 Dec	31 Jan	29 Feb	31 Mar	30 Apr	31 May	30 Jun	31 Jul	31 Aug	30 Sep
Area Recon	B	B	B	B	A	A	A	A	D	D	D	D
Hot Gun, BDA	A	A	D	D	B	B	D	D	B	B	A	A
Base Defense	D	D	A	A	D	D	B	B	A	A	B	B
Comments		A Battery completes 50% of the written/gunner's test.	100% of the battalion completes the APFT.	B, D, and Service Batteries plus HHB complete 50% of the CTT. D Battery completes written/gunner's test.	Battalion completes 100% individual weapons qualification.	B Battery completes 100% of CTT. B Battery completes written/gunner's test.		D Battery completes 100% of CTT. D Battery completes 100% of section certifications.	A Battery completes 100% of CTT. Battalion completes 100% of APFT and CTT.	B Battery completes 100% of section certifications.	Battalion completes 100% of individual weapons certification. A Battery completes 100% of section certifications.	

Legend:

APFT = Army Physical Fitness Test
BDA = Battle Damage Assessment

CTT = Common Task Training
HHB = Headquarters and Headquarters Battery

Figure 2: 1-5 FA's Rotation Schedule for Motorized Infantry Operations, Delivery of FA Fires and Base Defense while deployed in OIF II. (The battalion's maintenance, survey, meteorological and radar personnel participated in operations or trained simultaneously.)

and allowed the remaining TOC personnel to focus on other tasks. The FDC radios allowed the cell to establish a base defense net that coordinated eight OPs, a four-gun truck base defense reaction force and two ECPs. This base defense cell also tracked the movement of every convoy into and out of Camp Junction City. The brigade TOC monitored the base defense net.

FA Delivery of Fires. Counterfire and illumination are FA firing missions routinely executed from base camps in a post-hostilities environment. The three base camps were targets for enemy forces' mortar and rocket fires.

In addition to bringing one battery of M109A6 Paladins, the battalion brought all 18 FA ammunition support vehicles (FAASVs). Initially the FAASVs were used to reinforce the perimeter and as initial OPs until permanent OP towers could be constructed.

Because of the distance between the brigade's base camps, the Paladins could not range targets from camp to camp. Positioning the guns in locations between the camps was not an option due to the threat. So, three guns, an FDC and one FAASV deployed to Camp Manhattan (Habaniyah) to support TF 1-34 Armor and the forward support battalion (FSB) on an airfield close to Camp Manhattan, leaving an FDC and three guns in support of the remainder of the brigade in Camp Junction City. At Camp Manhattan, the

firing platoon was attached to TF 1-34 Armor and performed as if it were DS to the task force.

Both firing elements were linked to counterfire radars. Camp Junction City had the Q-36 Firefinder radar that deployed with the battalion, and Camp Manhattan had a Q-37 from the 82nd Airborne Division Artillery (Div Arty). Later, 1-5 FA received a Marine Q-46 at Junction City and an additional Q-37 in Manhattan. In both camps, critical friendly zones (CFZs) were established over each forward operating base (FOB).

At Camp Junction City, counterfire missions generated by CFZ violations were sent directly to the brigade fire support element (FSE). The firing platoon FDC monitored the voice counterfire net and started processing missions as "At my command, special instructions do not load." (At that time, 1-5 FA did not have the advanced FA tactical data system (AFATDS), so it coordinated the missions over FM radio.) This allowed the guns to receive the mission and traverse onto the target deflection. (See the counterfire process in Figure 3 on Page 18.)

While the FDC processed the mission, the brigade FSE conducted a clearance-of-fires drill in the brigade TOC. The clearance was not only for maneuver elements, but also took into account rotary- and fixed-wing air routes.

At Camp Manhattan, the Q-37 acquisi-

tions were sent directly to the task force FSE for the same clearance-of-fires procedures. Direct communications with the aviation brigade in the immediate area and an enlisted tactical air controller (ETAC) in the task force TOC enabled the same clearance procedures as in Camp Junction City.

Immediately upon clearing the fires, the responsible FSE executed the target—told the platoon FDC to "Cancel do not load; fire target number KS ####."

With multiple rehearsals involving all agencies down to the gun section, the counterfire times averaged 90 seconds from acquire-to-fire.

At both camps, the task force mortars followed every mission and quickly were added to the effects when targets were in range.

Motorized Infantry Battery. The idea for a motorized infantry battery was an extension of motorizing two of the tank companies in the brigade. All of the batteries drew six M1025/1026 high-mobility multipurpose wheeled vehicles (HMMWVs) in Kuwait and mounted .50 cal machine guns on them. This gave each battery the ability to perform as a motorized infantry unit. The two batteries responsible for defending Camp Junction City and providing the Hot platoons, respectively, contributed to the motorized infantry battery's base defense quick-reaction forces as well as provided security for logistics convoy.

During motorized infantry training at home station, the biggest challenge for the batteries' leadership was controlling direct fires. As Artillerymen, we traditionally are proficient at range cards and sector sketches in a stationary environment. In a motorized, dismounted infantry environment, sectors of fire and control of fire must be identified and rehearsed, based on positions within the convoy and anticipated upon dismounting. (Table VII Light Cavalry Gunnery training at home station was an excellent starting point to train these skills.)

Section chiefs, platoon sergeants and platoon leaders had to be intimately familiar with the control status for individual and crew-served weapons as well as the immediate application of the rules of engagement (ROE). Soldiers in every vehicle trained and rehearsed on identifying IEDs as well as conducted immediate action drills upon encountering an IED or a small arms ambush.

Another big challenge for the battalion in this infantry transformation was the focus of the battalion staff. The battalion staff was responsible for ensuring the fir-

ing battery met the five requirements for accurate predicted fire, overall command and control of the base defense plan for Camp Junction City and planning and executing ground maneuver.

The S2 developed named areas of interest (NAIs), priority intelligence requirements (PIRs) and a ground threat situation template that was nested with the brigade S2's. The S3 coordinated maneuver space, developed the task and purpose for each battery patrol and determined the rotation schedule for the batteries' missions.

Every patrol outside the gates had a task and purpose. The patrols' missions varied from kill or capture a high-value target (HVT) to distribute school supplies to further civil affairs (CA) and information operations (IO) efforts. (Most of the missions were non-kinetic missions for counterinsurgency operations.)

Battery Rotation Plan and Training Core Competencies. The batteries had three primary missions and rotated among them, as shown in Figure 2. The desired end state was for all firing batteries to execute motorized infantry

operations and redeploy with little or no degradation in their delivery of fires core competencies.

Constraints to the plan included the amount of time the patrol battery needed in its AO. The battery had to learn every street, work with the local police, visit with imams (local religious leaders) and execute CA projects. This mission required a four-month rotation.

Base camp defense and Hot platoon personnel changed every two months. We wanted to ensure the base defense personnel did not become complacent, and two months was the right amount of time.

While on base defense, the battery used one of the remaining guns to maintain crew proficiency and prepare to assume Hot platoon duties. The battalion master gunner supervised certification of the gun sections in accordance with the battalion's standing operating procedures (SOPs) and *FM 6-50 Tactics, Techniques and Procedures for the Cannon Battery*.

Additionally, the battalion identified and cleared an area in the desert off one

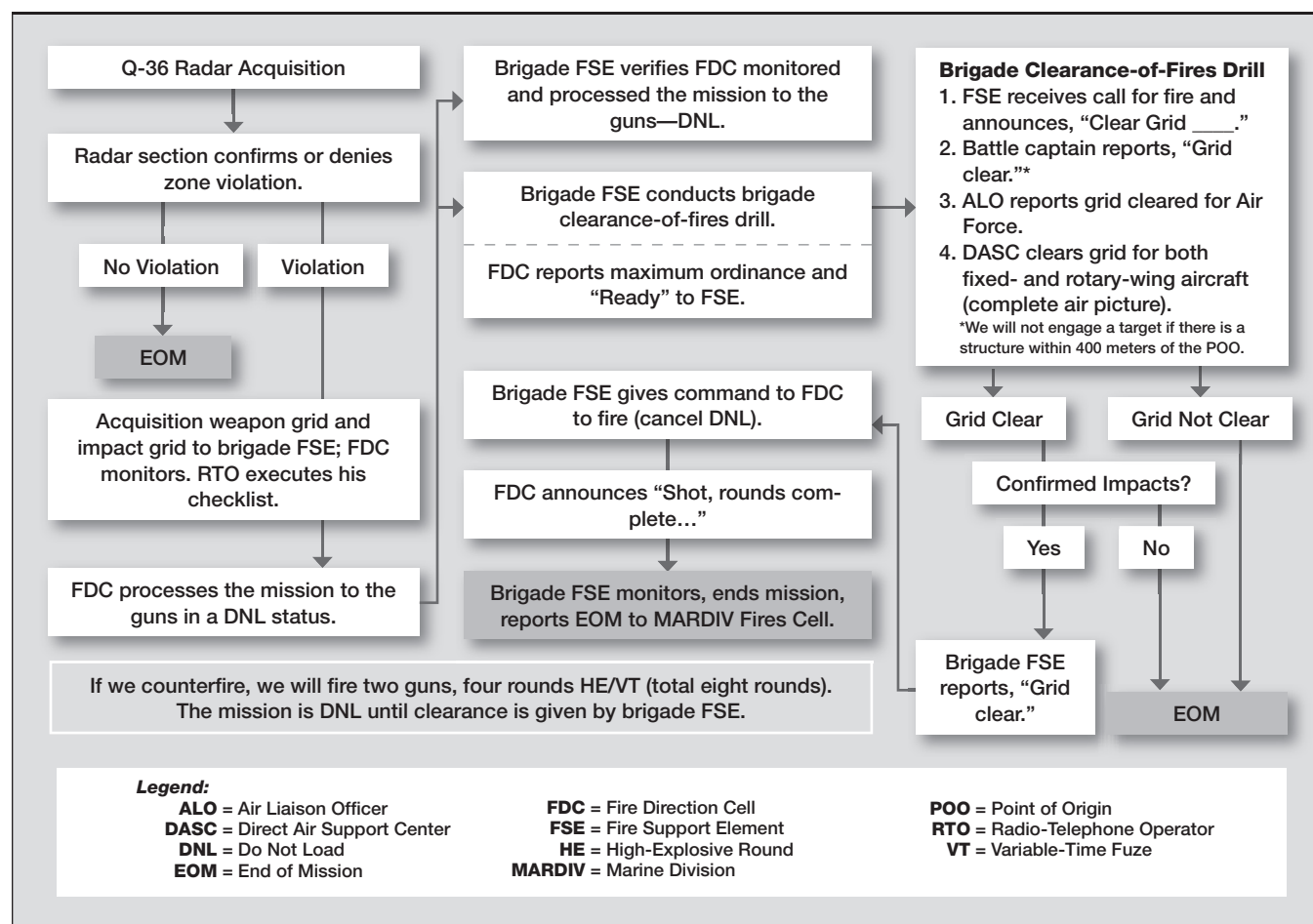


Figure 3: Brigade Counterfire Flow Chart



1-5 FA Soldiers clear a room during training. The unit used abandoned buildings on the base camp to train the skill.

base camp for live-fire training. The battalion sent out OPs (HMMWVs) to secure areas where Bedouins were most likely to enter the area and then called in missions. The battalion salvaged old Iraqi armored vehicles and hauled them to the area to use as targets. 1-5 FA worked with the infantry, armor and Marine units in the area to give their 13Fs opportunities to train on fire support skills.

In rotation, each battery live fired FA missions not normally performed in Iraq. This training gave all the gun crews multiple opportunities to fire smoke, Copperhead and illumination in close air support (CAS) battle drills. The training was scheduled at the least likely times for enemy indirect attacks; however, the Q-36 remained ready to acquire.

The training gave leaders a chance to review battalion gunnery and FDC personnel training and certification while in theater.

In addition to the live-fire training, 1-5 FA scheduled all platoon FDCs for rotating into the Hot platoon's fight. Minus the one FDC at Camp Manhattan, the battalion had five platoon FDCs that rotated every 12 hours as the controlling FDC for the Hot platoon in Ramadi. This paid great dividends upon returning to Fort Riley.

Only eight weeks after redeploying, the battalion fielded AFATDS and immediately went to the field for a live-fire AFATDS validation exercise. The battalion's success in fielding AFATDS

can be attributed to FDC personnel who recently and continuously had worked the basics of fire mission processing.

During the deployment, leaders from the base defense and Hot platoon batteries conducted a series of "right seat" and "left seat rides" at the six-week mark. An official transfer of authority (TOA) took place, and the units conducted the swap of missions with no degradation to the overall mission of the brigade. The patrol battery also executed such a plan for its TOA.

During the course of our deployment, each firing battery had one rotation on patrol and two rotations in the base defense and Hot platoon missions. The Hot platoon battery occupied two separate base camps, allowing one platoon to execute autonomous operations for two months.

The autonomous Hot platoon leader was fully integrated into the task force commander's organization. His battery was treated as a tenant unit, and he attended the command and staff meetings with that task force. His equipment data was transferred to the task force unit-level logistics system (ULLS), and he was fully supported by the maneuver battalion to prevent degradation of maintenance support for the separate platoon.

Service battery became the "work-horse" organization for the brigade. Logistic supply convoys were conducted every other day to maintain the

stock of required supplies and turn-in of equipment needing repair or evacuation. Of the 18 palletized load system (PLS) vehicles, six supported convoys. The remaining members of the ammunition platoon and, eventually, all the cooks helped man the brigade defense reaction force. Headquarters battery personnel not working in the battalion TOC also were part of the brigade defense reaction force and manned OPs and ECPs.

With a strong home-station pre-deployment training, 1-5 FA executed a variety of tasks in Iraq, proving, once again, that DS artillery battalions are versatile combat multipliers for their brigade combat teams. The battalion executed its mission in OIF superbly, while training and maintaining its FA core competencies throughout the deployment.

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Captain Douglas M. Thomas commanded D Battery, 1-5 FA, at Fort Riley and served as a Fire Direction Officer (FDO) for the battalion while deployed for OIF I and II. He currently is the Battalion Fire Direction Trainer at the National Training Center (NTC) at Fort Irwin, California. Among other assignments, he was the Assistant Brigade Fire Support Officer (FSO), Targeting Officer for 2-63 AR and Platoon Leader and FDO for B Battery, 1-6 FA, all in the 3rd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, in Germany. He is a graduate of the Officer Basic Course and Captain's Career Course at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, and the Combined Arms and Services Staff School (CAS³) at Fort Leavenworth.